



**For immediate release
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OPEN BURNING SEASON BEGINS IN MASSACHUSETTS

State requires residents to obtain local permit

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) today announced the season for open burning begins tomorrow, January 15, and runs through May 1. Property owners must obtain a valid permit from their local fire department or fire warden before conducting any open burning.

Burning must be conducted on land near the location of the materials to be burned, and at least 75 feet from a dwelling. Permits allow the burning of brush, cane, driftwood, and forestry debris, but prohibit the burning of grass, hay, leaves, or tires.

Those conducting open burns are encouraged to keep fire-suppression tools – such as a water hose, shovel, or other firefighting implements – handy and monitor the burn closely until it is dead out. If the burn appears to be expanding beyond the planned area, take action to put it out immediately. If you cannot suppress it, call the local fire department.

“Recent snow and ice storms have left a lot of trees, branches, and evergreen needles in many homeowners’ yards,” said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. “Left unattended, that wood debris will dry out and increase the threat of wildfires. Acquiring a legal permit and putting safe, open-burn practices to use while there is snow cover and frozen ground will be a great help in reducing wildfire threats later in spring.”

Each year, fires started by landowners accidentally burn thousands of acres and cost taxpayers thousands of dollars to put out. These blazes can cause environmental damage and threaten or damage homes, recreation facilities, and wildlife habitats, and unnecessarily encumber local and state firefighting resources. The effects of major human-caused wildland fires last for years, and sometimes decades.

Last year, several structures in locations across the Commonwealth were lost to wildfire, while many other homeowners suffered potential wildfire threat.

“Homeowners should burn now and not wait for nice weather,” said Commissioner Sullivan. “It’s a sensible step in wildfire prevention.”

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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For more information on open burning regulations and permitting, go to www.mass.gov/dcr and click on “conservation,” then “forest fire control” or go straight to www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/firecont/index.htm.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency’s mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.